



East of the River Action
for Substance Abuse Elimination

Dear Esteemed Members of the General Law Committee:

ERASE and its partners are gravely concerned about the repercussions of having alcohol accessible at local convenient stores (section 7 of HB5021). We have seen over the years that many convenient stores have a high rate of staff turnover, limited staff training and often employ persons who are underage 21, CT's legal drinking age. These staff issues create an opportunity for an increase in underage sales of alcohol to minors. With alcohol being the number one drug of choice of the youth in the ERASE Region it is essential that we continue to reduce access points for youth to obtain it. Convenience stores are a common access point for minors to obtain tobacco products. In a recent survey conducted by ERASE in an urban/suburban community 40% of youth who have used tobacco products purchased them in a store. While in the same community only 14% of youth who had drank alcohol purchased it in a store. Keeping in mind that alcohol is the drug of choice for youth in this town. Clearly, convenience stores create an environment where underage sales of tobacco are more commonplace than liquor stores are for alcohol. I encourage you not to allow the trend for tobacco sales to minors in convenient stores become the norm for alcohol as well.

Secondly, an increase in the hours bars and restaurants can serve alcohol to 2:00 a.m. has potential for devastating consequences for patrons and shift workers such as police, EMTs, nurses and their families. One can only assume that alcohol related violence and motor vehicle crashes will increase as extended beverage service hours will be correlated with increased alcohol use. From 2001 to 2009, on average, two in five family violence cases (40%) in Connecticut and the ERASE region were associated with drug or alcohol use (*2001-2009 Family Violence Detailed Reports* from the State of Connecticut Department of Public Safety Division of State Police, Crimes Analysis Unit). Approximately 41% of traffic fatalities are the result of drinking and driving. Nationally, almost 17,000 people die from alcohol-related crashes each year. (Connecticut Department of Public Safety Crime Analysis Unit (2004) *Crime In Connecticut*). Alcohol with later hours of consumption will caused increased driver fatigue. Fatigue and alcohol are a lethal combination. The majority of people driving at these late hours are people who work late shifts, we certainly do not want to put these police, nursing and other workers at increased risk of encountering a drunk or an excessively fatigued driver on the road.

ERASE hopes you will reassess these sections of HB5021. Thank you for your time and consideration. If you have questions I can be reached at bonnie.smith@erasect.org or 860.568.4442.

Regards,

Bernard W. Smith

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